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Focus remains on e-voting

Meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad – 10 March 2018 at the City Hall in Berne

Seventy-four members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met in Berne for their spring meeting. Two issues were once again the centre of attention – e-voting and the attitude of the Swiss banks towards the Swiss Abroad.

Shortly before the CSA meeting, Franz Grüter, the SVP National Councillor from Lucerne and IT entrepreneur, had launched an initiative calling for a nationwide ban on e-voting which has since caused a stir amongst the Swiss Abroad too. While more and more cantons are endeavouring to meet the requirements to enable all citizens – including those abroad – to vote electronically, the initiative committee is seeking to put the brakes on this development.

In Berne, Franz Grüter took part in a debate with Claudia Pletscher of Swiss Post, which manages the e-voting system. "The question is not whether but when e-voting will be manipulated by hackers," remarked Grüter. "I believe it's extremely important that we can have faith in referendum and election results." Many countries, such as France, Norway and Finland, have abolished e-voting again. "We also attach top priority to security and trust. Swiss Post is therefore

working with a system where any manipulation will be universally detectable," responded Claudia Pletscher. "This will enable us to verify where and how many votes have been manipulated." However, complete security against manipulation cannot be guaranteed. "The comparisons with other countries are misleading. The systems that were hacked in the USA, for example, have nothing to do with our system. Online voting was not scrapped for security reasons in Finland."

After a lengthy debate on e-voting, Remo Gysin, the OSA president, and Filippo Lombardi, its vice-president, reported on the current state of play in relation to the Swiss banks. "We're approaching systemically important and public cantonal banks to engage them in in-depth talks," said Gysin. "We've made some initial progress. The Banque cantonale de Genève has promised to reach out to the Swiss Abroad." Council of States member Lombardi reported on the latest developments concerning political proposals on the issue and called for patience. "Little strokes fell big oaks," summed up Tim Guldemann, the Council member and SP National Councillor.

MARKO LEHTINEN



Franz Grüter and Claudia Pletscher debating the risks of e-voting at the CSA meeting.

Photo: OSA/Adrian Moser

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